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ABSTRACT

The roles of impersonal (or abstract) and relational (or connected) modes of knowing in the experiences of young adults were studied, and the ways the two converge are described in this report of the post-college phase of a 7-year longitudinal study of the epistemological development of college students, i.e., their assumptions about the limits, certainty, and criteria for knowing. The study group, initially 101 students, consisted of 53 students by the last phase. The experiences of participants suggest that contextual knowing is characterized by a complex interplay between relational and impersonal modes of knowing. This intertwining is clearest in contextual knowers' examples of situations in which the balance of the two was not present, and the situations resulted in lack of ability to connect with others in some cases and to maintain the separate self in others. The convergence of relational and impersonal modes of knowing holds implications for education on a number of levels. It provides empirical evidence for the argument that education needs to focus on advancing both modes of knowing and their integration. Collectively, the experiences of these contextual knowers suggest that effective education would emphasize the construction of knowledge, the importance of the knower in what is known, and the value of others' perspectives, and would offer direct practice with both types of knowledge. (SLD)

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The Convergence of Relational and Impersonal Knowing in Young Adult's Epistemological Development

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The Convergence of Relational and Impersonal Knowing in Young Adult's Epistemological Development

Marcia B. Baxter Magolda

Modes of knowing and the nature of knowledge are topics of considerable debate in higher education, inquiry, and human development. Most agree that rationality as a mode of knowing has dominated our social system, education, inquiry, and our views of mature human development. It has a long history; Eisner attributes the primacy of rationality to Plato: "To secure knowledge that is dependable, Plato believed, one must move away from the empirical world that our senses come to know and move into the world of abstraction. The most secure and dependable form of knowledge is achieved not through empirical investigation of sensory information, but through the exercise of our rationality" (Eisner, 1985, p. 30). Many educators are now arguing that dependable knowledge can be obtained through other modes of knowing, namely modes that connect the knower to that which is being known. This paper addresses the role of both *impersonal*, or abstract, and *relational*, or connected, modes of knowing in young adults' experiences.

Palmer (1987) argues that the predominant mode of knowing, which he calls objectivism, distances the knower from the world, hindering the use of relational components of knowing. He argues for the use of objective modes "in creative tension with their relational counterparts" (p. 24). Bruner, calling the rational, objective mode of knowing paradigmatic, argues that its value lies in creating "good theory, tight analysis, logical proof, and empirical discovery guided by reasoned hypothesis" (1986, p. 13). He also assigns value to what he calls the narrative mode, which leads to "good stories, gripping, drama, believable (though not necessarily "true") historical accounts" (p. 13). He adds that narrative knowing "deals in human or human-like intention and action" (p. 13), a notion that sounds similar to Palmer's relational component of knowing. Noddings (1991) clarifies the relational component in her discussion of interpersonal reasoning. She says: "In contrast to logico-mathematical reasoning that proceeds step-by-step according to a priori rules, interpersonal reasoning is open, flexible,

and responsive. It is guided by an attitude that values the relationship of the reasoners over any particular outcome, and it is marked by attachment and connection rather than separation and abstraction" (p. 158). Thus knowing can be approached from the separate, abstract, or rational mode or from the connected, relational mode.

This same distinction has emerged in studying human development, particularly moral and epistemological development. Gilligan's (1982) articulation of "a different voice" in moral development sparked considerable controversy over whether Kohlberg's (1969) model of moral development, characterized by a rational, logical perspective, explained mature moral development adequately. The different voice came to be called the care voice due to its focus on attachment and connection, whereas the Kohlberg version of moral development was labeled the justice voice due to its focus on separation and abstraction. Current research supports the notion that both voices can represent moral maturity. Gilligan (1982) argued that both perspectives were in the end connected; that they converged in the representation of maturity. Gilligan and Attanucci (1988) pointed out that losing site of either the justice or care focus had the potential to detract from moral maturity. Lyons (1983) provided empirical evidence that young adults in her sample were more likely than younger respondents to use a combination of justice and care. The relational component of moral development identified first by Gilligan and substantiated by Lyons (1983), Gilligan, Lyons, and Hanmer (1989), and Brown and Gilligan (1992) also appeared in epistemological development. Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) sketched out a relational approach to knowing on the basis of a study of women, contrasting the approach in many instances to the more separate approach evident in Perry's (1970) earlier depiction of intellectual development.

Two major pitfalls are evident in the debate about modes of knowing. First, because the relational mode in many ways challenges the dominance of the rational mode, the discussion turns to which of the two is best. This pitfall can be seen clearly in debates about inquiry methods and in much of the moral development literature. Second, because the relational component of development stems largely from the study of women, many perceive

the discussion of two modes of knowing as a comparison of women's and men's modes of knowing. While evidence abounds that the modes of knowing are gender-related, the introduction of gender fuels the fire over whether one mode is superior. As Eisler (1987) points out, our society has traditionally valued the power of the Blade (objectivity) over the power of the Chalice (subjectivity), leading to a dominator society in which those who use the non dominant mode are marginalized. As is usually the case when one mode and its proponent dominate another and its proponents, it is tempting to attempt to overthrow the dominant one rather than join the two in partnership.

This paper argues, on the basis of empirical data, that relational and impersonal modes of knowing are integrated in complex forms of knowing. In earlier ways of knowing, both modes exist within the same sets of epistemic assumptions, indicating that relational and impersonal approaches are equally complex. However, both have their limits, limits which are overcome as the two converge in complex forms of knowing. The first portion of the paper describes how the two converge by recounting young adults' descriptions of how they know; the second part of the paper translates their insights into enhancing educational practice.

Modes of Knowing in College: Phase I

This paper reports the post college phase of a seven year longitudinal study of college students' epistemological development, or their assumptions about the limits, certainty, and criteria for knowing. Data from the post college years revealed that gender-related patterns that existed for these students during college converged in the post college experience in work, advanced educational, and personal environments. The gender-related patterns during college revealed that some students approached knowing primarily through a *relational* mode characterized by attachment and connection whereas others used an *impersonal* approach marked by separation and abstraction. Because previous theoretical perspectives stemmed from primarily single gender studies, I employed an inductive approach to allow students' constructions of their experience to surface thereby avoiding restricting interpretation of the students' experiences with preexisting theories. Open-ended interviews took place each year

starting with 101 students' first year in college. Of that group, the number remaining in the study each year was 95, 86, 80, 70, 59, and 53 for the remaining six years respectively. The group remained gender balanced throughout the study. [A full description of the college phase of the study appears in Knowing and Reasoning in College: Gender-Related Patterns in Young Adult Intellectual Development (Baxter Magolda, 1992)].

Three sets of epistemic assumptions, or ways of knowing, were prevalent in college. In each, two gender-related patterns appeared. I use the term gender-related to convey that patterns were used more often, but not exclusively, by one gender than the other. In absolute knowing, characterized by viewing knowledge as certain, receiving pattern students used an approach centered around listening and recording information, preferably in a supportive environment. For example, Toni explained: "I like to listen -- just sit and take notes from an overhead. The material is right there. And if you have a problem, you can ask him, and he can explain it to you. You hear it, you see it, and then you write it down." Mastery pattern students asked and answered questions to gain knowledge. Tim's comments capture this approach: "I like getting involved with the class. Just by answering questions, asking questions. Even if you think you know everything, there're still questions you can ask. When he asks questions, you can try to answer them to your best ability. Don't just let the teacher talk but have him present questions to you." Despite their different approaches, Toni and Tim both endorse the belief that knowledge is certain.

In transitional knowing, characterized by growing awareness of uncertainty in some areas of knowledge, interpersonal pattern students addressed uncertainty by incorporating their own and others' experiences whereas impersonal pattern students relied on objective use of an individually focused process for knowing. A comparison of Kris' and Scott's approaches clarifies this distinction. Kris said: "Classroom discussions are better for me to learn. You have an opening lecture, where you have the professor discuss. Then students can contribute. Listening to other students contribute their ideas and putting in my own inputs -- that makes learning better for me because it makes me think more and try to come up with more generative

ideas as to what I would do in a situation." Scott offered: "The debate and discussion process for me is really interesting. I learn a lot more because I remember questions. And I guess I learn the most when I sit and I'm actually forced to raise my hand and then I have to talk. I have to sit there and think on the spot." Kris learns through connection with others whereas Scott learns through thinking individually.

As students moved to independent knowing, a perspective in which most knowledge was viewed as uncertain, interindividual pattern students focused primarily on others' perspectives whereas individual pattern students focused primarily on their own perspectives. For example, Alexis describes the interindividual approach:

> I listen to their arguments for it; then I listen to other people's arguments against it. And then it's just my own personal view, really, whether I can establish the credibility -- so I guess it really stems from the credibility of the person who's saying it also, as well as just the opinion on it. I listen to both sides. I usually throw some of my own views into is as well. So I'm influenced by other people -- like each member of the group should be influenced by each other. But when the final vote comes in, you should go with what you believe.

Alexis flips back and forth between her views and others' and struggles to include her own in the final decision. Lowell's comments show the contrast of the individual approach:

> He looked at it in this way, and I looked at in another way... (You had) to try to get your point across without sounding too dominating -- I'm searching for words and not finding them. To try to listen to theirs, to really listen, not to just hear it and let it go through. And then to try to take that into account and reach a compromise....But I don't think the attempt was to try to change each other's mind. It was just, "Your point is all right, but you've got to look at this part, too, because this is as relevant."

Lowell has no problem keeping his own view in the forefront; his struggle is instead "really listening" to the views of others.

The receiving, interpersonal, and interindividual patterns illustrate relational knowing given their connection with others and what is to be known. Knowledge acquired via abstract modes does not connect with self for these knowers. Thus, they try to build belief systems through connection to others and their own experiences, often struggling to truly connect with themselves. These patterns were used more frequently by women than by men in the study.

The mastery, impersonal, and individual patterns reflect impersonal knowing in their focus on objectivity and separation of knower and known. They build belief systems via abstract processing of information and others' perspectives. These patterns were used more often by men than women in the study. No pattern was used exclusively by one gender or the other. Perhaps the most important finding of the college phase was that these patterns existed within the same sets of epistemological assumptions, providing important evidence that the relational and impersonal patterns are equally complex approaches of knowing. Said another way, the pair of patterns in each way of knowing shared the same basic assumption about the nature of knowledge despite different approaches to coming to know. A fourth way of knowing appeared for a few students during college in which the two patterns converged. It is this perspective that was explored more fully in the post college years.

Contextual Knowing: Modes of Knowing in the Post College Years

Because phase two is an extension of phase one, a description of the participants as college students frames the context of the findings. As college students, the participants attended a state institution with a liberal arts focus. Admission is competitive and the entering class of which the study participants were a part had a mean ACT score of 25.8 and 70 percent ranked in the top 20 percent of their high school class. Their majors included all six divisions within the institution and involvement in college was high. Of the seventy participants continuing in phase two of the study 59 graduated within four years and the remaining 11 in five years. Of that group only two were members of non dominant populations. The group remained fairly evenly balanced by gender with 37 women and 33 men year five, 29 women and 22 men year six, and 27 women and 21 men year seven. The occupations of the post college participants included insurance personnel, sales positions, accounting, computer consulting, teaching, mental health professionals, advertising, communications, corporate positions, banking, real estate, retail management, airline attendant, and government positions. Ten were in advanced academic settings full-time (three of these graduated from these settings in year six) and seven were engaged in formal advanced education simultaneously with their

full-time jobs. Nine were married, two had a child, and one was divorced. Fourteen had left their original post graduation job due to conflicts with their values (4), lack of fit (5), transfers due to marriage (3), transfer within a company (1) and pregnancy (1). Two of these individuals changed jobs three times between graduation and year seven.

The qualitative nature of the interviews used during college was continued during phase two to allow learners' stories to be the primary focus. The fact that few researchers have explored epistemological development after college increased the importance of allowing insights to emerge from the learners' experiences in phase two. The annual interview began with a summary of the focus of phase two of the project. The participant was then asked to think about important learning experiences that took place since the previous interview one year ago. The participant volunteered those experiences, described them, and described their impact on her or his thinking. The interviewer asked questions to pursue why these experiences were important, factors which influenced the experiences, and how the learner was affected. The interview addressed learning experiences in work life, everyday life, and academic life if applicable. Work experiences invariably involved discussion about the worker's role, relationships with coworkers, supervision issues, and daily work decisions. Academic experiences involved discussion of the learning environment, the role learners, teachers, and peers played, and how work was evaluated. Discussions about everyday life revolved around insights participants gained from interpersonal relationships and every day living. Interviews were conducted by telephone and ranged from 60 to 90 minutes.

The interview responses were analyzed using Glaser and Strauss' (1967) constant comparative method. The transcriptions of the taped interviews were reviewed and divided into units. The units were then sorted into categories to allow themes to emerge from the data. A rating manual, constructed via the constant comparative method and revised during phase one, was used as a second way to identify epistemological assumptions and ways of knowing. In this step, reasons respondents gave for their thinking were compared to the manual to identify epistemological assumptions, and thus ways of knowing, represented by those

reasons. Credibility of the data was addressed through prolonged engagement to build trust and understanding and member checking to assure accuracy of interpretations.

Contextual Knowing: Relational and Impersonal Modes Intertwined. The fourth set of epistemological assumptions noticeable for a few students toward the end of college emerged more completely during the post college interviews. I called this set of assumptions contextual knowing. Contextual knowers looked at all aspects of a situation or issue, sought out expert advice in that particular context, and integrated their own and others' views in deciding what to think. Perhaps the most striking characteristic of contextual knowing was the integration of relational and impersonal modes of knowing. Although relational and impersonal patterns emerged as distinct in previous ways of knowing, contextual knowing necessitated both. Contextual knowers felt that rationality in terms of consulting experts and processing evidence was necessary but simultaneously valued working through their perspectives by accessing their own experience and others' perspectives. Contextual knowing involved constructing one's perspective in the context of one's experience, available information, and the experiences of others. Unlike independent knowers, contextual knowers are unwilling to rely solely on their own perspective nor rely solely on those of others. They attempt to integrate constructing their own perspective with remaining open to considering other's thoughts as part of the process. Contextual knowers make judgments about other's perspectives as well as about information that informs the issue under consideration. Thus contextual knowing incorporates the relational pattern evident in earlier forms of knowing through its focus on accessing one's own and other's perspectives and experiences. Once thinking is connected to, or anchored in, the self, standing outside of one's experience is viewed as productive. Thus contextual knowing simultaneously incorporates the impersonal pattern evident in earlier forms of knowing through its focus on establishing, or constructing, one's own belief system by abstractly processing experience and information. Participants' discussions about how they came to know and decide during their initial years after college graduation illustrate the variations of how the relational and impersonal threads intertwine in their experience.

Reginald's struggle to establish his perspective and simultaneously remain open to new ideas illustrates how the relational and impersonal patterns came together in his experience. As Reginald introduced important learning experiences he had encountered in seminary, he brought up his struggle to sort out the meaning of intellect and emotion during his second year there:

> I think what I struggle with with that and while it's taking place is to claim it, to claim the experience. . . . I have to have that identity of what I do believe before I can be--well, not before--but along with the open mind and the openness to other views and respecting that. Because if not I'm just sort of wishy-washy, flimsying around, "Oh, okay, okay." And then if anyone asks, "Well, what do you believe?" "Well, I'm just open to anything." I thing that's part of what I was talking about, that self-identity. What is it that makes--that's part of what makes you who you are. That's perhaps the intellect and then when you live it that's the emotion or the passion perhaps that you bring to what you do.. . . The belief is sort of a clay that is not hardened, that is always being molded. It can shift; it can take new forms. But it's still the same, still a belief system within your self-identity, within your experience that won't deny your experience. It won't completely just blow away like sand, but it will form and it will be consistent--it has some weight to it.

Reginald chose the word *intellect* to capture the experience he has claimed, the basis of what he believes. Claiming this experience and what he believes forms an identity that helps him balance accessing others' thoughts and acknowledging his experience. He explains this notion further through the idea of boundaries:

> In defining that self, identifying that self, is the creation of boundaries in what we do personally and publicly. . . . if I didn't have that boundary I might not bring out what it is that I need, what it is that I do believe if we're talking about -- it can be theological, it can be academic, it can be personal. If I disregard the boundary I can be overwhelmed or just I won't be able to present who I am and what it is that I need.. . . I always considered the word boundary as a barrier. And so if I created these things I would be. . . a closed-minded person; I would be a person that when it came to--there wasn't a meeting place because there was this wall in the way. The other person would come to one side of the wall; I'd come to the other side of the wall. And we'd look at brick. And there wouldn't be a place where I could meet them. . . But to have that present with intellect is very important. And if I have those barriers I'm not--well, if I created what I thought would be barriers, I wouldn't have that. But also if I don't have anything, if I don't have boundaries, I lose the sense of who I am and I can't learn. And that's another thing, it restrict my learning, restricts my learning and restricts other people's learning because I do bring something to that experience.

Reginald's claiming of intellect connects his belief system to himself, resulting in establishing an identity. The boundaries of the identity keep him from being consumed as he meets others in dialogue. His thoughts suggest that effective connection with others requires some separation - in his case maintaining his self identity. He argues that one cannot effectively "meet" others without a self-identity. Reginald recognizes, however, the role emotion plays in what he claims as knowledge and in the "passion perhaps that you bring to what you do." He explored this topic in a paper on Christian theology. He commented:

> The one thing I've just recently been looking at is that I've now stated that I think that academics is the meshing of intellect and emotion, that the two are--and probably intellect, emotion, and action. . . I'm now again developing the sense of coming up with my own ideas and putting them down the way I would create them and claiming that experience and ideas, in the sense of intellect and emotion. The latest paper that I've been focusing on is one on filia, Eros, and agathe, the three forms, the Greek understanding of love and the three forms that they take and how, at least in the church understanding and perhaps socially and generally we tend to box these three . . . I think . . . a misunderstanding comes from trying to put them all in these little boxes. The theory that I had is that it's more of a --they're all sort of meshed together and entwined. And I got the definition of erotic being one of longing and fulfillment, and when we're in a committed relationship we still have friends that we may be attracted to. And this is, again now, where I'm trying to say intellect and emotion, combining them together, so we can talk about committed relationships and be in friendships. But the emotion and our basic chemical structures are going to throw that quite awry when you try to--"Why am I attracted to this friend and this wonderful person? I've got a spouse here." And with erotic being defined as fulfillment --the friends have to speak about how that fulfillment will come about. And then as we include agathe in this whole entwinement, this whole group, this mish-mash of what love is, agathe brings in the idea of respect for one another, self-respect, respect for the person you're in a relationship with and if it's a committed relationship. And being honest and true to what you're created to be. So that's where I'm starting to entwine the intellect and the emotion as being academic. That we can't--we can say all these wonderful things, but when it gets down to action sometimes the emotional gets in the way.

In addition to working out claiming his own voice, Reginald is sorting out how what one thinks and feels merge. Although somewhat tentative about it as he was writing his paper, the following year he introduced the topic again, offering a more decisive statement on the topic:

> in the dialogue process there is emotion and intellect happening. . . . how one expressed their opinion, full of emotion. If you think it's all intellect, then we're kidding ourselves. Because you can sense the

> passion sometimes behind someone's belief. I think from what I've heard from those who don't like that to be the case,. . . fear is that in a setting of rationality one has to keep that intellect and barrier strong against the tides of emotion. The mere sweeping of one wave of emotion gets over the barrier, the whole area will be drowned. And intellect cannot stand against emotion. I don't think that's on the ball or that's where it's at. Emotion and intellect are always interwined. You can't escape that. The water is part of our person. . . . They bounce off one other. An emotional experience may spark the intellect and the intellect may spark an emotional experience. Those two are entwined quite nicely.

Collectively, Reginald's comments reveal that he not only found a way to balance his own perspective with accessing others, but also arrived at a construction of how his intellect and emotion interrelated. He clearly supports a combination of relational and impersonal knowing in his insistence on boundaries for self-identity as well as in his belief that emotion and intellect are always intertwined.

Deirdre discussed this interweaving of relational and impersonal patterns from a different vantage point. After being frustrated for most of her undergraduate experience with the lack of connection between academic and personal life, she valued her graduate experience in which the two were more connected. In describing her first year in graduate school, she said:

> I've got papers and a lot of journal writing, but it's much more of an academic and interpersonal interspersed in the writing. That's what makes is so relevant, sort of brings everything together and makes the learning experience that much more powerful. You're finally given an audience to listen to you feel and kind of legitimize it, everything--both--I don't want to keep stressing this--but I guess it's the subjective and the more academic things that. . . I can't really pinpoint what I'm trying to say. I guess, you know, just finding a voice and kind of exploring how you got to where you are.

This implies that validating her voice helped Deirdre connect knowing to herself. A year later, however, Deirdre was not solely focused on expressing the interpersonal side of her experience. She was discovering that the interpersonal and academic arenas were related; that using literature and theory she was reading helped validate and understand her experience. On the subject of new literary and theoretical sources she was encountering, she explained:

> No, it's not just finding them. It's how you learn about them, too. It's not just that these are kind of opened up as sources. But it's using them; it's kind of realizing that everybody's experience isn't this kind of

> dominant idea, that your sense of what's important and what really is knowledge really is dependent on where you're coming from or what you value. Like if you're male or female or what kind of class you come from or what kind of ethnic makeup you are. I was always kind of battling with, like, "Gee, I'm not understanding calculus." And something just didn't seem interesting me or just seemed kind of irrelevant, stupid. It says something about how you look at yourself, too, as far as, "Well, gee, I really was right thinking some of these things, even thought I was told". . . different things that I thought of about--just the fact that you don't, you're not really made aware of that it's not just white men that write. I mean, that really says something. You always kind of suspect that--I mean, I always kind of hoped I could do these things. But then when that possibility is taken away from you--because I remember thinking, "Writing would be nice, but what makes me think I would be one of the four in history that could do something like that?" It comes down to having a really tremendous sense of self to be able to come and do that.

Deirdre discovered that who she is affects how she knows and what she knows affects who she can become. The validation of some of her thoughts brought them to the surface so she could make meaning of them. Although she recognized that impersonal knowing she was previously exposed to was limited and less meaningful than when combined with her own experience, once she connected to herself she could use separation in knowing in a different way. Using literary and theoretical sources to analyze her own experience now helped her to further develop a sense of self. It also changed other areas of her life, as she describes below:

> . . . as I'm becoming more educated, I'm also becoming--you know, my consciousness is also being kind of--you know, it's going through the roof so that I'm beginning to look at things ranging from my intimate relationships, I mean, with my parents and with other people, in different terms. I'm beginning to see more where this theory kind of really fits into everyday life. Just the different things I run into every day it seems are taking on new kind of tones to me. Those kind of become instrumental in teaching me something, as well as everything kind of--there's this interplay, you know. And some things challenge other things. I'm taking now the four classes, culture and education, and that's really interesting because everything kind of becomes open for discussion and that kind of thing. . . . And then the other classes, two in the English department, Marxist literary criticism, which is kind of taking an historical approach to what calls itself Marxist. So I'm getting a sense of how to use that, you know, that kind of critique of political economy in terms of text. But not only text, because I'm beginning to see Marxist critiques of what would be in my mind, you know, what could become critiques as far as the consumerism. Like I watch on TV sometimes and I'm like, "Oh, my gosh." You know, it really puts everything in a whole new light. So that's interesting, when you expand what you consider text.

Later in the same interview Deirdre continued along this vein:

> I also mentioned how it kind of changes my relationships. I think this was really clear. My mother and I are very close. I've been here six years, and we talk almost every day, even though she lives in Florida. She's never been to college. It's just kind of a new thing for my family, you know, one of us here. So she's kind of been with me through this whole thing. It's interesting because she's really --she's about 60--and she's really kind of getting a really nice sense of herself. . . And she's beginning to really reevaluate or reassess some of the areas in her life. She was a nurse for twenty years, and so we talk about that as a women's role and what that meant and how doctors are paid so much more. We talk about so many things, but always kind of with a political edge to it now. She really--she knows where I'm coming from. And she's like "You're right." It's interesting and it's wonderful. She's like, "I can't believe that it's taken me 60 years." . . . And all of a sudden being given the language to kind of talk about that and understand it, it's really--I mean, it's a wonderful experience for her. Kind of painful, but really great as well. That's really kind of opened up some things, you know. . . . I guess, in a way because it puts us on a different--we're just not just mother and daughter. We're kind of more--we're learning from each other where I feel like I'm giving back something. Because she has gotten me here. I talk to my friends a lot. And I make them see things in a different way. It makes a big difference--it just goes to show that school isn't just about English and all these little compartmentalized--I mean, there's really a cross-over in our real life.

Deirdre's comments reveal that what she is learning in school serves more than an academic purpose. It changes how she thinks about her experience and herself; it changes her relationships with other people. She finds her education more meaningful because it is no longer impersonal; it now is both impersonal and relational in the way she uses it to make meaning of her experience.

Reginald and Deirdre encountered the relationship of relational and impersonal patterns in their pursuit of ideas in their academic work. Mark, in contrast, experienced this relationship in his decisions about his law career and personal life. Being a proponent of logic throughout his undergraduate career, Mark went to law school with a logical plan for his future. Much to his surprise, law school was not as stimulating as he expected and his first internship in a law firm was less than appealing. At the same time he was entertaining thoughts of marriage to a woman he had dated for a number of years. His thought process, as is evident below, still contained a strong logical component but had an added dimension:

> As far as firm and personal life, I sit down and I write down things I know, pro and con, "Go into a relationship," "Don't go into a relationship," cost-benefit kind of analysis. Like I said, I don't leave my rationality behind because I think that's really an effective tool. And then I think about all my options, and there's something about it. It carries on its own momentum. . . . So I listen to those feelings, and I come to my room and I sit down and I push all my books away. I grab a sheet of paper or whatever and start writing things down, how I feel. And then when I feel like I've got a handle on those feelings and options, then I talk to the people affected. . . . When you bring other people into it, you push your feelings down just a touch because then you want to be open minded again at that point. And then you talk to people unaffected by it, too, because obviously when people are affected by it they're invested in it. At the same time, though, the people I talk to who are unaffected by the situation, I make sure they're my friends and I know them well enough that, for instance, if they're going through a divorce I know that their perspective on marriage isn't going to be that good. So I take that into account. So they're objective in a way, and then they're not quite as objective on one way because of their own personal life. I like talking with wise people, basically smart, old people. Another thing that helps me decide is if over time my feelings are consistent, then you become certain that life in a firm is not for you period. And the same with engagement and marriage. I mean, if it's consistent over time, that helps. I don't let my feelings rush me into anything because, again, because you're dealing with personal life more, if you do something rash it can cost you a lot. And then I revisit the decision all the time to see if it feels right every day.

Mark clearly viewed logic and feelings as important factors in deciding whether to marry and what to do with his law degree. He uses logic to check emotions, preferring to avoid doing anything rash on the basis of feelings. However, he had also discovered that the logical approach did not always lead to happiness. Summarizing how he felt about rationality and feelings he said:

> There are a whole bunch of critiques of rationality in academia. I just put those aside and say, "What works? What gets to the core of the reality I see?" And "What gets to the facts as far as I can see?" Rational thinking as best I can really gets me there. And then I get there and I see, "Okay, here's the set of facts. What do I feel?" And then that carries me the rest of the way.

These comments imply that Mark relied most on rationality, tried to approach his feelings from an objective stance, and acknowledged that feelings had to be included in the process. A year later, still in law school and engaged to be married, he discussed the issue again:

> I definitely didn't feel happy being in a firm. And in a way that is something I put on my list and looked at objectively. Some of the things I put down for instance about working in a big law firm, on the

> pro side I'd write down "gives you more downward mobility. You can always get a job at a smaller firm, more flexibility than the prosecutor's office." On the con side I may write down, well the thing is you feel it so strongly you don't have to write it down, but on the con side in my mind I write down "but I'm not happy here." Or "I feel tense here because of the evaluative process that is constantly going on. Should this guy be a partner, should he not that is always going on. So feel uncomfortable " All that stuff goes down. Sometimes I'll put it down as an objective thing.

At this point I asked Mark to clarify whether the pro and con started out as objective but came to include feeling. He replied:

> Yes. Definitely. It's infused with feelings. But when I sit back and look at the list I try to look at it objectively. I try to sit back and weigh them. . . . Every term is loaded with feelings and emotions and even in a secondary way--for instance feelings and emotions as far as how the quota for billable hours will impact on my love relationship with my wife and my family, so there's all kinds of emotions in there. So they definitely get weighed objectively along with everything else. They're part of the mix. They're inseparable.

Although Mark's thought process is still characterized by logic and a rational process, he states more definitively that feelings and logic are inseparable. The emptiness he experienced doing some of the things he thought were logically right during law school convinced him that happiness had to be a central criteria in his decisions. His logical approach up to this point was separate from self. Realizing his unhappiness, Mark connected with himself through acknowledging his feelings and their relevance in his decision-making.

Andrew concurred with Mark's stance, arguing that feelings should play the dominant role in such decisions:

> I think that too many people go into things blindly and they don't make intelligent decisions. There's so many people that you talk to--they're not happy where they are in their life. It's because they didn't question and they didn't make intelligent decisions. They didn't have opinions. "I guess this is okay, " you know. They never looked at their opinions; they never went above and beyond. . . ..There's too many people that complain all the time that aren't happy out there. And I think it all leads back to that, they never really found how they felt or never made a decision. I think once you make that decision and find the way you feel--I find myself changing opinions all the time because people can convince me, but I'm comfortable with myself where I am and I'm a much happier person because of that.

At this point I commented that it sounded like Andrew was drawing on research, information and feelings and asked whether he thought he used a combination of these. He replied:

> I think it's definitely a combination. And I think feelings is almost the dominating because you can do all the research you want, but whatever you feel, gut or whatever, is what is eventually going to really make your decision, or at least should. So I think feelings come into it, a bigger play of it than anything. Those are the things that you develop and are more comfortable with. I don't think you always make the logical choice. And I think that's okay. If you're happy with it, because I honestly believe there's no point in your life when you can say "I can't make a change." There might be a time when you can't do it right now or whatever, but you can always make plans to make that change. But I think it goes on feelings there. Because definitely if I was doing the logical choice a lot of times I would not have done a lot of things I did. I usually weighed my options and I relied heavily--I used to bounce ideas off my parents and my friends. But when it came down to it, nine times out of ten I usually went with what I felt in the first place, even before I did all the research analysis. But by doing that I kind of backed up and was able to support the way I felt. In some ways I'm a very emotional person. I don't go up and down, but I'm very passionate and strong about my feelings. So maybe that dominates me more than some people. I'm more willing to go on that instinct and stuff. A lot of people are much more comfortable, "If this is a logical decision, then I can do that."

Andrew's speculation that some are less willing to go with instinct certainly captures Mark's approach but Mark's reliance on both logic and feelings belies Andrew's notion that only emotional people place feelings in the dominant role. Both men define intelligent decisions as those that take both logic and feelings into account. Feelings in this case seem to represent these men's connection to themselves.

The notion that logic and intuition, or impersonal and relational dimensions, are equally intelligent was addressed by Sheila who encountered the issue through her relationship with her husband. Sheila was a strong relational knower throughout college and remained so in her job as a flight attendant after college. Marrying a man who used a strong logical approach led her to talk about how each affected the other:

> I think that we both learn--(he) is learning to go forward with his heart a little bit more and I'm working more with my mind a little bit. But you know everyone regresses to what they are most comfortable with. . . . but it's a learning experience and I think that we both decided that while it was going to be a challenge, it was a challenge that we both needed and both wanted. . . .

Previous comments Sheila had made led me to ask whether she perceived both approaches equally intelligent. She replied:

> Yes, I do, although I--it leads us to two different types of knowledge. It's the same kind of thing, um, I think its necessary to have--it's the yin and yang thing that its necessary to have both. Whereas (he) is leading to a knowledge outside himself, that is really going to be effective in pushing him forward in the rat race, which is important, but he needs to be more in touch with himself, spiritually, emotionally. I do think that I need to be a little bit more intellectual --once again in quotes-- in my approach toward doing things. I need to be a little bit more logical. So I can say I have a basis for my feeling on this situation. I think it's intelligent in both ways, but I've come to see how important it is to have both things. I think if you are self absorbed you turn into somebody who is selfish and rather out of touch but at the same time if you just do everything logically sooner or later you are going to have a heart attack. Because it's not logic that rules the world. The world keeps going logically, yes, but everybody's got their own heartbeat and their own speed of doing things and their own rationale and if you run around and do things logically that's not necessarily the pace or the rhythm of your own heart. . . . I waffle in between the two. I think it's a yin and yang situation. Each person needs to find that happy medium. Unfortunately it's very difficult because I think people tend to be one or the other. And you have to work at it just like learning to write or ride your bicycle.

Sheila sees the value of incorporating both knowledge outside of self and internal knowledge of self but also recognizes that she and her husband both have a default preference. Although one has to work at it, she argues that it is important to find the balance. Sheila seems to be saying that connection to self (relational knowing) is crucial, but total immersion in self is not healthy. The latter can be avoided by separating from self and using logic (impersonal knowing) in balance with connection.

Sandra described this same balance in discussing how she decides what to believe:

> I like to hear, especially people with business backgrounds and that kind of stuff, I like to hear their viewpoints because they're a lot of times very different from mine. How do I decide what I agree with? I guess--hmm. I guess I already have, especially from experience--that would be another thing I've brought with me--I already have a pretty solid idea of how I think it should be. And if they say something that basically goes along with that, and I'm willing to listen and hear what they have to say, but if it doesn't feel comfortable, I guess, sort of at a gut level, then I just figure, "Well, I'll stick with what I've got." I think I've got a pretty good base and some experience in the different areas already. But, yeah, I guess I kind of go with a gut feeling. I don't know if that's a good way to do it or not. I think in my job I kind of did it that way. And maybe towards the later part of college. But I think at the

> beginning of college it was more like, "Could you prove it?" If it seemed really logical and it could be proven and it made a lot of sense to me, then I would probably take it in. Whereas later in college, I guess, I had that basic framework laid down and I kind of thought, "Well, does this match?" or at least come close. Well, I still have to prove it. But--gosh, I don't know how to explain it. I still have to prove it, oh, definitely. If there is no proof, forget it. I won't take it in. But I guess that you really, really have to work harder if it felt uncomfortable to me or if it was different from a basic knowledge that I had or a basic foundation for what I believed in. I mean, I suppose I could be swayed, but you have to work seventy-five percent harder to do that if it doesn't kind of go along with what I already thought.

Sandra recounts that in her earlier thinking at the beginning of college logic was sufficient for her to believe something. Later in college and in her professional work she began to consider how it matched with her knowledge base and particularly whether it felt comfortable or not. Having connected with herself, she was no longer willing to judge solely on logic. She clearly states that the match with her "gut level" dictates whether she accepts a view but proof is still essential before even considering the gut level match.

Finally, some contextual knowers described the relational dimension as contributing to learning content knowledge. For Barry learning through accessing other's experiences was more valuable than abstract learning:

> I think that's where you learn the most, hands-down, is from people and from them talking about their experiences and what they went through. Like when I was out west last year, I learned so much out there because there were so many people who just did not come from the same class that I had come from. And how they grew up and what they had to do and just their experiences. You can read about it; you can read about the blue-collar lifestyle or you can read about poverty; you can read about Europe; you can read about the Eastern bloc. But it's a textbook, and once somebody starts talking about--like an individual I met from Prague one time talking about they couldn't get a car, you know, they had to wait to get a car six years. (A woman) wanted to go to medical school, and unfortunately she didn't pass her test so she couldn't do that. And that was determined at 12 years of age. Those are the things that will stay with you, you know, personal experiences.

Barry's abstract knowledge took on new meaning when he saw it in action out west and in Europe, much like Deirdre described by attaching her abstract knowledge to her own personal experience.

All of the participants quoted thus far convey an interwoven picture of relational and impersonal patterns. Some, like Mark and Sandra, moved to this perspective from a primarily logical approach, whereas others such as Sheila and Reginald moved to this perspective from a primarily relational approach. The integration of relational and impersonal knowing can also take place in various contexts: in academic work for Reginald and Deirdre, in career and personal decisions for Mark, in everyday personal life for Sheila and Barry, and in work life for Andrew and Sandra.

Contextual Knowing: The Dilemma of Imbalance of Relational and Impersonal Modes. In addition to describing knowing as an interplay between the relational and impersonal dimensions, many contextual knowers described the dangers of the two being out of balance. The primary theme here was that relying too heavily on one dimension results in being blinded; in being unable to know in as accurate a way as possible. Andrew's and Mark's previous comments reveal the dangers of overlooking the relational dimension in decision making. Mark described this in more detail as he discussed the conflict that confronted him in law school:

> At Miami (University) I wanted to be everything society says is a success without buying into society's values. The most freedom would be getting everything society says is success so you have a lot of freedom and money and latitude from people but not buying into their values at all so you can still act however you want. There ended up being a conflict (laughter) and that may have been what hit me here at law school. . . . It could work at Miami because what it took to be successful at Miami didn't conflict with who I was! But you have to be pretty darn--I would have had to been pretty darn schizophrenic to keep it up in law school. To do everything I thought was successful here but not buy into its values, it wouldn't have worked. Even when I came to law school with that plan in mind -- the ultimate plan was still do what's successful, but after my Supreme Court clerkship, what would I do? I thought well I would be in the ultimate position to do whatever I want to do because I will have done everything possible and then I'd be in a position to make a choice that reflected exactly who I was, or at least more clearly. . . . . I never dreamed that I would be unhappy working on law journal. I didn't think it would be as tedious and boring as I found it. That never figured in. There was no way law school and its classes could be as big a turnoff as they were. I was like "this isn't going to be too bad." I had false expectations.

Mark's logical plan to obtain the ultimate freedom was sabotaged by his dissatisfaction with some aspects of law school. He clearly never expected feelings to get in his way and had not planned to deal with them until his plan had been implemented.

Al made a similar discovery in his work as a computer consultant. Al said that in college he always did what he thought was right but in his work he became frustrated with additional considerations that precluded him from doing things the way he thought was best. Like Mark, Al had not expected his feelings to interfere with his work. He described the situation like this:

> I wasn't happy because I was always frustrated . . . because I wanted to do it a different way or I was always frustrated because I'd think "That's wrong." The way I wanted to do things wasn't the way things were happening. So I had to do something; I'd make myself miserable always being frustrated by it all. . . . when you're dealing with so many people in that work environment, and everyone has their own way that things should be done, and then at this place I worked everyone, you know, no one stopped, they would all just say it. There were times when they really hurt your feelings; they didn't mean to do it that way, but they don't know what they're saying. There's just a lot of crazy things that went on there as far as--you know, I couldn't understand some of the politics of it all. You just have to take it all in stride. And I wasn't doing that very well. So I had to take a step back, like I was saying, and try to open myself up to more ideas and more ways of doing things. And then if I still thought the way I would normally do it is the best, I have had to learn to just roll with whatever we came up with or whatever was decided.

In order to manage his frustration, Al had to realize that he was not always in control and could not always determine how things should be done. He had to access other's perspectives despite his preferences and had to manage his own reaction to the work setting to avoid frustration.

Some contextual knowers also noted that learning was enhanced by the relational dimension. Barry, who earlier described the role of personal experience in augmenting abstract knowledge, advanced that truly understanding other ideas required empathy for the persons holding them. Specifically, he said:

> I think the most important thing someone can do, especially in my job, is put yourself in the other person's shoes and try to see how they see their world, look through it in their attitudes, their beliefs, what they think is good, what they think is bad. Because they're different from

> yours. They may think this is right, this is wrong, you might have a different idea. But you have to understand it because if you don't you're never going to reach that person. . . . You've got to sort of take back and look at what they had gone through in their own lives and sort of understand it. You don't have to do it yourself, but you have to understand it and where that comes from. If you can't do that, then you're just closing your mind and you're never going to be able to relate to people, I think, in anything you do. If you can't understand their attitudes, you don't have to accept them, but you have to understand them and respect them.

Accessing other's views, then, is a matter of understanding their experience in order to interpret a situation the way they do, and respecting their perspective even if one does not accept it. Mark concurred with the notion of respect in saying that "I think if you have intelligence without some kind of sense of humanity,. . . meaning or being shown with kindness and respect to students, I think that that (lack of humanity) can defeat a lot of intelligence." Both men indicate that learning on the part of all parties is enhanced by respect and accessing other's views.

There are numerous examples of the dangers of the balance tipping in the favor of the relational dimension as well. Although Mark argued for the sense of humanity in the classroom, he also had this to say about the advantages of rationality:

> Maybe that's why I did so well in the classroom is because I was used to not going with feelings. Maybe that's what really put me a step up because I could go into any classroom. . . I can listen to radicals on both fringes, right and left, and go in there, shove my feelings aside, listen to it, and then develop rational critiques of both sides. And because I don't have the investment of feeling in it, I learn a lot. I can talk to these folks. Whereas other people will just shut both fringes out because they <u>feel</u> threatened. I can get to a point where I don't <u>feel</u> anything. That hurt me in the relationship, too, because I didn't want to <u>feel</u> love all the time because it's such--you're so vulnerable then. That came out of a few childhood experiences where I felt basically love was betrayed or wasn't able to come to any fruition.

Mark makes it clear that his learning is enhanced by shoving feelings aside, essentially extracting himself from the situation, enabling him to hear and critique other's perspectives. Although he views this as advantageous in the classroom it clearly had its drawbacks in other realms of his life. Reginald describes a similar situation in which he works not to move his feelings out of it but to use them appropriately:

> . . . discounting other people's beliefs, one thing that's very easy to do and I think for me also is to--if I don't like it, just discount it. That's very--well, it's more than subtle--it's basically saying "Well, I'm just not going to respect your experience and where you're coming from." And I think that would have been not true to what I was wanting to say and where I'm at. However, I think sometimes when something of that nature comes up it's very, it can be very emotional in terms of bringing up feelings perhaps of anger or of disagreement, that kind of frustration. And especially if it's someone you want to communicate with and maybe come to some resolution or some creation of idea or action or product. Or you're in dialogue with and you're trying to communicate about something. . . . I can see two possible venues of that emotion. One, the first part of it is being discounting and discarding. And the other one being taking responsibility. . . I thing to be open, to not discard it completely, but you can--I believe that it's very valid to be able to disagree with the concept but not to invalidate the person's experience and what brought them to that.

Reginald apparently experienced some of what Mark witnessed in his classmates; the inability to hear others because of disliking what they had to say. Reginald states clearly that he does not want to do this, even though it is a natural reaction, but rather wants to take responsibility for his emotions and avoid invalidating another's experience. Reginald's earlier discussion of self identity revealed that he wanted to maintain himself in this process, just as Mark struggled to avoid vulnerability in his personal relationships. Again the balance of relational and impersonal knowing appears to be the backdrop for these perspectives.

Too much relational focus can also interfere with personal life experiences. Lowell discovered this through the breakup of his marriage. Describing himself as a rational economist, he blamed himself for not seeing things differently earlier in the relationship:

> Another flag that I think I should have seen. She basically went home every weekend -- a half hour drive away. I look back and say "Bah - how could you be so stupid?" You know. Hindsight is 20-20. Those are the type of flags that I keep thinking in my mind - bah, bah, bah. They're just popping up all over the place, the landscape is just littered with them. But you know, it is really easy to see once you step aside and take a look back. So maybe that's a good way of --before I do enter into a relationship, a marriage type of thing, I think I will do that maybe. Take a month off and step back and look. That's something I learned that's a good tool of making sure everything's right. . . . And all those flags I talk about. There were logical, things that if I had thought about them logically would have--I mean I am still a human being and I have emotional feelings that--I don't disregard that. . . I was blind to a lot of things. I don't think that it was that I chose not to see, it's that I was just blinded by it.

Lowell essentially was blinded by his love for his wife. Despite his ready use of logic at work and the flags he can now identify that signaled trouble, he was unable to see those flags nor process them logically from his vantage point in the relationship. As he processed the experience of divorce, he emphasized the importance of balancing feelings and logic, or impersonal and relational patterns of knowing.

Sandra also described a personal experience in which emotions hindered her from resolving the situation initially:

> I had some pretty bad experiences in the last year, which we won't go into. It makes you rethink people in general. And it's difficult to say, "Okay, now after this bad experience, it was this specific person versus everybody." Because after a certain experience for a while I went to, "Everybody is untrustworthy. I can't tell people things." I kind of went into my little shell. But then as I worked through this wonderful experience, then I started to get back to, "Well, everybody's not like that. That's crazy. There are still some people I can confide in. There are still some people who are what I would consider good people." . . . When I first meet somebody I'm just a little bit less open. They have to work just a little bit harder to get to know me. Once I get to know them a little bit and they've sort of made some little proving thing. . . once I find I can trust them on a few little things. . . I tend to keep my mouth shut more unless it's somebody that I have a long experience of being able to trust.

Sandra's emotional response to this experience prompted her to withdraw and mistrust everyone. Only later, when logic reentered her processing of the experience, did she distinguish between the person who betrayed her trust and others. Thus impersonal knowing helped her put the experience in perspective as well as think about how to approach people in the future. These stories reveal the necessity of connection to and maintenance of the sense of self, which in turn allows for effective use of abstract reflection on one's experience.

Contextual Knowing: The Complex Interplay of Relational and Impersonal Modes. The contextual knowers' stories support the argument mounted by the educators cited at the outset of this paper that the notion of self is centrally involved in being able to think and know. Many of the stories illustrate that one cannot know without inclusion of the self. For example, Deirdre describes knowing as taking on real meaning for the first time when she is able to use her academic knowledge to analyze her own personal experience, to "find a voice and explore

individual then stands apart to judge others' contributions to the dialogue to determine whether they alter the self-authored belief system.

Thus the experiences of the participants described here suggests that contextual knowing is characterized by a complex interplay between relational and impersonal modes of knowing Both separation and connection are viewed as part of intelligent decision making, or as Sheila argued, are both equally intelligent approaches to knowing. The Phase I findings support Sheila's notion that relational and impersonal approaches are equally complex approaches to knowing within the earlier ways of knowing. Sandra's explanation of how she decides what to believe as a contextual knower shows how both contribute equally and in an integrated fashion to deciding one's perspective.

The intertwining of relational and impersonal dimensions is clearest in contextual knowers' examples of situations in which the balance of the two was not present. These situations resulted in lack of ability to connect with others in some cases and lack of ability to maintain the separate self in other cases. Mark's confidence in his logical self-authorship blinded him from the possibility that his choices would not lead to happiness. Upon discovering this, he was able to use the relational dimension (or to attach to his own experience) to mediate his choices and return to a balance. Lowell was unable to step back from his relationship with his wife to see problems in the situation such that his connection to her overwhelmed his own self-authorship. He vows to include more of the separate approach the next time he faces relational decisions. Despite the differences in the situations described as imbalanced, all reflect an imbalance between separation (standing outside one's own and others' experiences, or one's feelings) and connection (accessing one's experience, emotions, or others' experiences). Knowing contextually requires a balance of the two in order to construct a reasonable perspective within a particular context.

The notions of separation and connection are less clear cut in contextual knowing due to this complex interplay. In contextual knowing the relational dimension takes the form of connection to self and others. Knowers coming from a relational approach connect to self

how you got to where you are." Before that took place she regarded some aspects of her education as "stupid and irrelevant." Mark's and Andrew's experience demonstrates that they were unable to know regarding their career paths until they acknowledged that how they felt about their work had to be included. Reginald explained that he could not know in any ongoing sense of the word until he established self-identity or boundaries (defined by his self-authored beliefs) and he is aware that this intellect is constructed in part on the basis of his emotions. Yet all of these participants incorporated impersonal knowing by standing apart from themselves as well. Deirdre relied heavily on her literary and theoretical resources as a language for understanding and critiquing her own experience. Mark relied on rationality to process his feelings as well as to access the objective factors related to his career decisions. Once Reginald established his self boundaries they became in his terms "intellect," the rational basis from which he could meet others in dialogue.

The interplay between relational and impersonal dimensions of knowing reveals that knowing involves the self (one's own experience, emotions, beliefs) coming to know in the context of circumstances external to the self (others' experiences and perspectives, the circumstances of the context). Contextual knowing involves claiming one's own perspective, or establishing one's own belief system, in order to access the context effectively. Reginald articulated the importance of self-authorship, both in terms of claiming one's beliefs and continually developing beliefs in context, in the process of knowing. The process as he describes it is both relational and impersonal. In part it is recognizing his emotions and how they effect his beliefs; in part it is deciding and then claiming his perspective to use as a benchmark in dialogue with others. Contextual knowers emphasize that dialogue, or access to others' perspectives and experiences is required for self-authorship and developing beliefs. (Dialogue could involve "others" indirectly as with Deirdre's literary and theoretical books.) This access to the context can also be both relational and impersonal. It is relational in that the individual steps inside the experience of others, or connects to them; it is impersonal in that the

when their voice is validated (as in Deirdre's case). Knowers coming from an impersonal approach find connection to self when they no longer separate their belief system from self (as in Mark's case). Connection to others comes more easily for those with a relational bent; having experience connecting with others they need only to find the line between meeting and being merged with others as Reginald described. Knowers with an impersonal bent find connection to others when they truly acknowledge others' views and try to understand them rather than process them abstractly (i.e. Barry's comments). In contextual knowing the impersonal dimension takes the form of maintaining an intact self-identity, the boundaries of which allow for abstracting processing of one's own and others' experience when appropriate. When knowing is anchored in this self-identity, the individual is able to reflect abstractly on experience and interactions without threat to the integrity of the identity. This ability to reflect abstractly is viewed by those quoted above as essential to balancing relational and impersonal knowing.

Implications for Educational Practice

The convergence of relational and impersonal modes of knowing in these participants' lives holds implications for education on a number of levels. It provides empirical evidence for the arguments of Palmer and others that education needs to focus on advancing both modes of knowing and their integration. Education would be better served by replacing the debate about which results in more dependable knowledge with how each mode of knowing develops and contributes to complex knowing. Human development and gender difference research would be more productive if both were refocused on how each mode of knowing contributes to maturity. Refocusing these debates and research would help view relational and impersonal modes of knowing in partnership rather than one as dominant and one as marginalized. Educators and researchers must view modes of knowing differently before educational practice can be reformed to offer experiences that promote contextual knowing.

Palmer (1990) proposes that educators must acknowledge the interplay of knower and known in teaching. His words on this subject are informative:

> The only objective knowledge we have is the provisional outcome of a complex transaction in which many subjectivities check and balance each other. It is a fluid process of observation and interpretation, of consensus and dissent, conducted within a far-flung community of seekers who agree upon certain assumptions, rules, procedures--many of which are themselves up for debate. This, I think, is an image of objectivity that is faithful to the way we know. It is also an image that clarifies the goal of good teaching: to draw students into the process, the community, of knowing. (p. 12)

Palmer's vision of how we know captures the same convergence of relational and impersonal knowing evident in the stories from the post college years recounted here. The way these same individuals knew in college, where their educational environments were dominated by objectivism, largely ignored the interplay between the knower and the known. Most of their academic learning experiences validated impersonal knowing; those that validated relational knowing were exceptions. It was these exceptions, however, that started these participants toward contextual knowing and toward integration of relational and impersonal modes of knowing. Experiences in their post college jobs and academic programs, their everyday lives living on their own, and their significant relationships with others revealed the necessity of the two modes more clearly. A closer look at those experiences reveals that they drew the participants into the knowing process by highlighting the interplay between the knower an the known.

Numerous writers (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule, 1986; Noddings, 1991; Palmer, 1990 to name a few) have argued for drawing students into the knowing process, describing how students are unable to view it as a process when they only see their professors full blown perspective in the classroom. The implications of the college phase of this study include principles for and extensive discussion of drawing students into the process of knowing (Baxter Magolda, 1992). The contextual knower's stories extend beyond drawing students into the knowing process to how participation in that process aided their integration of relational and impersonal modes of knowing. All were, essentially, faced with some direct

encounter or experience which both brought about their awareness of the limits of their mode of knowing and necessitated working on knowing in a more effective way.

Reginald's seminary instructors started the first seminar by emphasizing the need for students to decide what they believed, to construct knowledge. Reginald struggled with the dialogues that ensued for two reasons: first, he "flimsyed" around because he had no base from which to avoid accepting everything, and second, because his emotions often led him to discard others' thoughts. He was unsatisfied with both these conditions and worked to overcome them. His resolution hinged on the realization that he could define a set of beliefs without becoming close minded (a balance of separation and connection) and that emotion always played a part in one's construction of knowledge. Reginald recounted talking with one of his instructors about these issues and also sorting through them via his Christian theology paper. His story indicates that good educational practice would address the dilemmas in constructing knowledge directly through class discussion, exercises that promote balancing relational and impersonal knowing, or reading material that would heighten students' awareness of the process and give them experience with it.

Mark was a highly successful undergraduate student. His career intentions for law school were widely known as were his values and the type of person he perceived himself to be. Mark developed relationships with numerous mentors with whom he shared these views openly. He had no direct experiences in college, however, that provided even a glimmer of the pending conflict between his values and his career plans. As he stated in the interview, "I never dreamed that I would be unhappy. . ." He indicated that what it took to be successful as an undergraduate never conflicted with who he was. This implies that he was able to access knowledge without being involved in it himself. In law school the conflict erupted. The direct experience of an internship in a firm revealed that to be successful he would have to stifle himself in numerous ways. This made him uncomfortable in the firm environment and sparked his reevaluation of aspects of law school he had planned to pursue. Good educational practice for Mark would have involved the surfacing of this conflict during college through some

experience that would have made him aware of the need to consider his values, his self in career decisions. In some ways Deirdre's experience in graduate school offered her this awareness. Her program's emphasis on using abstract knowledge as a language for understanding your own experience helped her make this connection.

Another aspect of good educational practice involves including others in the process of knowing. Al's frustrations in his post college job (which was an excellent position by most standards) stemmed from having to consider others who mediated what he thought was best. He commented that in college he always was able to do what he thought was right. Al encountered group work in his college courses which required him to work with others to produce a collective product. However, he always took leadership roles in those settings to make sure that things went his way. Thus he never really had to access others' perspectives and learn how to balance them until he found himself out of the leadership position occasionally in his work. For Al, group work that directly taught students how to access each other's perspectives and how to exchange, process, and decide about these perspectives would have advanced his relational abilities during college.

Sandra and Barry encountered some direct experiences in college that helped integrate relational and impersonal knowing. Sandra worked part time during school in the mental health field, which was her major. Gaining experience is what made the difference she described in accepting anything that was proven in her early college years to requiring it to match her experience in later college years. The latter could hardly have taken place had she had no experience. Barry's international experience made him realize the importance of knowing through relation to others rather than just reading about their lives. Both Barry and Sandra entered their work environments aware of and using both modes of knowing. Good educational practice based on their experience requires more direct involvement in one's field, in experiential contexts, or at the very least discussion about their importance.

Sheila's and Lowell's encounter with balancing relational and impersonal knowing occurred in their marriages. Sheila's story conveys the learning of this balance to be a positive

challenge as she and her husband learn from each other. Lowell's story is more painful as the lack of balance hindered his resolution of his marital problems. Although a possible coincidence, Sheila's undergraduate experience prompted her to involve herself and knowledge outside of herself in knowing. Lowell's training in economics emphasized his involvement in the known much less. And while college is not necessarily charged with helping students develop successful marital relationships, an introduction to the role of the knower in the known and the relational mode of knowing might have helped Lowell in an important aspect of his life. He knew how to use rationality in his economist role at work but he was overwhelmed with the emotional side of his relationship with his wife. Experience with Palmer's notion of subjectivities checking each other may have changed his situation.

Collectively the contextual knowers' experiences suggest that effective education would emphasize the construction of knowledge, the importance of the knower, or self, in what is known, the value of accessing and processing others' perspectives, and offer direct encounters and practice with relational and impersonal modes of knowing. Offering knowledge as separate from knowers restricts their ability to self-author their beliefs, to effectively connect their beliefs to self, or view knowledge as both an impersonal and relational process. If knowers can recognize the interconnection of relational and impersonal modes of knowing in work and personal life, they could certainly capitalize on this interconnection if it were presented openly in the educational enterprise. The college phase findings show that students have both relational and impersonal patterns early in college. Validating both of these and helping students weave them together would promote their ability to know in more complex ways.

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